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BOSTON TAPESTRY

(1962)

The Sculptor

ALFRED M. DUCA

Alfred M. Duca, a native of Milton, Massachusetts, makes his home in Boston. He studied at the Pratt Institute in New York from 1938 to 1941 and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts 1943 and 1944.

He is credited with the development of many new technical processes now being widely used in modern painting and sculpture. One of his earliest innovations was the invention of the polymer tempera process in 1944. In 1959, he became associated with Massachusetts Institute of Technology working under a Rockefeller Foundation grant to develop the use of modern technical advances in the casting of sculpture. He continued studies and experiments in the same program at MIT under a Ford Foundation grant which began in 1961.

Duca has held one-man exhibitions of his work in Boston and New York art galleries from 1947 through 1964. Permanent exhibits of his work may be seen at the Worcester Art Museum, the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Mass., the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y., and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

The Sculpture

BOSTON TAPESTRY

Alfred M. Duca's original free-flowing sketches became the actual blueprint for translating his exhilarating vision into the five-ton, iron and glass sculpture in the south lobby of Prudential Tower.

He devised a graphic shorthand by which it was possible to translate his two-dimension drawing into multi-dimensional molds for casting the iron forms. This ingenious system allowed him to retain a sense of soaring spontaneity in the finished castings which belies the extraordinary technical skill represented in this major work of art.

The iron, the most common and venerable of all metals, has been given vibrant life; what was spent scrap iron now wings upward with soaring, graceful lightness.

This major work, by Duca, is a true New Englander. The theme is Boston — an interwoven abstract pattern of its people, its history, its topography, its presence. Here are its people, its ships, and its spires. Here are its hills, its trees, its symbols, ethnic and religious. Wings, sands, and waves are woven into the rolling patterns of this tapestry.

The metal — iron! Four tons of white-hot, molten iron, poured into 136 separate molds of hardened sand, each fashioned by the artist into the shape and form you see in the tapestry. Quantities of iron from all parts of New England were brought to the foundry site. Some of the scrap iron might well have come from the original ore bogs of the historic Saugus Iron Works, where the first cast iron was made in the early days of this nation.

The brilliant lustrous glass is, in every case, an authentic fragment of the world famous Sandwich glass. These fragments, prized by collectors of Americana for their vivid clarity of color, were reshaped by the artist in hundreds of designs fashioned by him to carry out the theme of the "Boston Tapestry."

The artist has an obvious deep attachment to Boston — old and the new. His beautiful tribute to her complex charm bears witness that he has not been discouraged by her iron will.

The work is continuing — and the same uninhibited elan, the dependence on intuitive judgement, is noted in the artist's approach to developing a patina and lighting effect. The intrusive lamp attachments, wires and harsh lights are unfortunate at this time and only temporary. At this stage of the work's development one sees only the base rather than the final surface of the patina which the artist is seeking to achieve in his finished work.